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SUBJECT: BURMA: WFP EXTENDS ASSISTANCE TO EX-POPPY GROWERS

REF: 04 RANGOON 240

**¶1.** Summary: The World Food Programme has extended emergency food assistance for a second year in Burma's Shan State. The new \$7.9 million program will benefit over 347,000 beneficiaries in ex-poppy growing communities and WFP would "welcome (donor) support." End Summary.

**¶2.** WFP, like other UN agencies, has assessed that the GOB's ban on poppy cultivation, and other efforts to eradicate opium production in Burma, has affected many households by removing a primary income source and creating a serious malnutrition crisis. A one-year, \$4 million emergency food assistance program, commenced in 2004, targeted about 180,000 beneficiaries in the ethnic Kokang and Wa areas of Shan State near the Chinese border (reftel).

**¶3.** The WFP recently launched "Emergency Food Assistance to Vulnerable Families in Shan State" (EMOP 10345.1) and proposes to offset the affect of the poppy ban by offering food aid to the hardest hit communities. The 12-month program, scheduled to last through May 2006, will reach 347,600 beneficiaries in the Wa, Kokang, and Lashio areas of northern Shan State and several communities in southern Shan State (all controlled by ethnic national armies).

**¶4.** The main objective of the food assistance program is to provide food security to former poppy growing households during the transition period from poppy cultivation to alternative income sources. The program includes components to rehabilitate communities and steer families back toward self-reliance, via food-for-work, food-for-training, and food-for-education programs. Relief rations will be provided for a limited period, to cover the leanest months, and as a back-up in case of natural disaster.

**¶5.** The program involves 19,961 tons of food and will cost \$7,924,474, including just over \$4 million in direct food costs. WFP will work in collaboration with local communities and partner organizations, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and six international NGOs and two local NGOs. In a recent note to donor missions in Rangoon, the WFP-Burma program made a "soft" appeal for unspecified support.

Martinez